

2002
Annual Report
Of the
Alabama State Fire Marshals Office



John S. Robison
State Fire Marshal

CONTENTS

Transmittal Letter	2
Investigations	
Classification of Cases	4
By County	5
Classifications of Property Involved	7
Requested By	9
Fatalities	
By Cause	10
By County	11
Statistics	
10 Year Fire Death Record	13
Deaths by Months – 2002	13
Deaths by Ages – 2002	14
Deaths by Race and Sex – 2002	14
Permits/ Licenses	
Sprinkler	15
Blaster's	15
Fireworks	16
Inspections	
By Classification	17
By County	18
Reinspections By County	20



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March 25, 2003

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Commissioner Walter A. Bell
201 Monroe Street; Suite 1700
Montgomery, AL 36104

Re: 2002 Annual Report

Dear Sir:

The 2002 Annual Report of the Alabama State Fire Marshals Office is submitted in compliance with Section 36-19-26 Code of Alabama 1975.

For many years the fire marshals office and the public have suffered due to understaffing of this division. At times an investigator/inspector has been responsible for as many as nineteen counties and much of the equipment used by these employees had to be purchased by the employees themselves. Due to the efforts of several former Commissioners, particularly Former Commissioner David Parsons, the State Fire Marshals Office has been able to hire additional field staff resulting in an increased ability to provide life saving services to the public in a more timely manner.

All field personnel, are cross trained in both investigations and inspections. At the same time, one of the most effective recent changes is for some personnel to concentrate on inspection/code enforcement issues. By doing this, we are able to respond to requests for inspections and reports of hazardous conditions more quickly and effectively, as these employees are not generally affected by appearances in hearings, grand juries and trials. This enables us to address the issues of hazards and the elimination of code violations thereby providing a safer environment throughout Alabama. Additionally, this enables business owners to open their doors sooner resulting in an economic benefit to the affected communities and the state as a whole.

This past year resulted in an increased response to weather related disasters in every area of the state. As pointed out in the last annual report, the division needs to acquire a medium size flat bottom boat and motor to provide access in areas where the presence of water prohibits access by vehicles. The division also needs two four wheel all terrain vehicles as access to areas following hurricanes and tornadoes is impossible during those hours and days following an event where people are in need of assistance, evacuation and other services our personnel are trained to provide. Additionally, the boat and ATVs will enhance our abilities to enter areas where insured property has been damaged and to provide valuable information back

to the Commissioner's Office enabling the Commissioner to provide information to the Governor's Office.

Employees of this division continue to participate with organizations and other agencies to provide free smoke detectors throughout the state. This program has benefited several counties and communities over the past few years, while providing opportunities for the participants to learn more of what they must do to reduce the threats associated with fire.

During 2002 this division conducted 822 fire, explosion and related investigations. Of these, 269 have been classified as acts of arson with another 14 known to involve criminal activities. The remaining 539 cases include 134 known accidental fires or explosions. Many cases carried over from last year remain under investigation and will result in an increase in some categories as specific causes are identified. Investigators filed 146 criminal charges with 54 for arson or attempted arson, 22 for criminal mischief and 17 for burglary. Additional criminal charges will be filed as investigations continue and cases are presented to grand juries. Investigators also obtained 61 convictions with 29 for arson or attempted arson, 10 for burglary and 6 for criminal mischief. Again, the number of convictions will increase as additional arrests are made and cases are adjudicated.

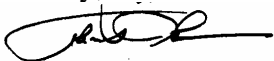
Fire deaths in 2002 increased to 78 from 76 in 2001. Although this represents an increase and any fore deaths are too many, this number represents the fifth time in the past ten years when Alabama fire deaths have been below 100 and the fourth time the number of deaths has been less than 80. We continue working with public and private sources to educate the public on this issue and to identify new approaches which may assist in this effort. I have been asked to serve on an international committee to develop new technology and strategies associated with fire related deaths and injuries worldwide, and am hopeful these efforts will further benefit the citizens of our state. With regards to fire related injuries and deaths, misuse of smoking materials and heating equipment related fires once again account for the vast majority of our fatal fires.

The overall revenue collected by this division for 2002 was \$3,150.00 less than for 2001. A reduction in revenues occurred with blasting contractor licenses/blaster certifications (\$3,550.00) and fire protection sprinkler contractor licenses (\$3,400.00). An increase occurred with fireworks permits (\$3,800.00). Legislation has been introduced to double the costs of all licenses and permits and to create new sources of revenue associated with the fireworks industry. In addition, work is currently underway to increase revenue collected from fire protection sprinkler contractor licenses and to create a new source of revenue through the licensing of people to perform weekly fire pump tests.

This division continues to work with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, Office of Homeland Security, Department of Public Health and others regarding matters of mutual interest. Projections for the number of hurricanes and related secondary affects from these storms are expected to increase our activities during this year.

Your support is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely;



John S. Robison

State Fire Marshal

CLASSIFICATIONS OF CASES INVESTIGATED

ARSON BY FIRE	269
PENDING FURTHER INVESTIGATION	166
ACCIDENTAL	134
NOT OTHERWISE CLASSIFIED	13
CRIMINAL/NON FIRE	7
BOMB THREAT	2
EXPLOSIVE DEVICE	2
INTELLIGENCE	2
UNKNOWN/UNDETERMINED	219
NOT REPORTED	5
SUICIDE	1
SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE	1
K-9 ONLY	1
TOTAL	822

INVESTIGATIONS BY COUNTY

AUTAUGA	7
BALDWIN	17
BARBOUR	11
BIBB	7
BLOUNT	11
BULLOCK	8
BUTLER	8
CALHOUN	31
CHAMBERS	17
CHEROKEE	11
CHILTON	16
CHOCTAW	5
CLARKE	13
CLAY	9
CLEBURNE	16
COFFEE	15
COLBERT	17
CONECUH	7
COOSA	8
COVINGTON	10
CRENSHAW	4
CULLMAN	7
DALE	8
DALLAS	32
DEKALB	9
ELMORE	18
EXCAMBIA	13
ETOWAH	10
FAYETTE	3
FRANKLIN	8
GENEVA	10
GREENE	8
HALE	7
HENRY	2

INVESTIGATIONS BY COUNTY– Continued

HOUSTON	4
JACKSON	14
JEFFERSON	40
LAMAR	-
LAUDERDALE	17
LAWRENCE	14
LEE	9
LIMESTONE	5
LOWNDES	6
MACON	1
MADISON	4
MARENGO	15
MARION	12
MARSHALL	12
MOBILE	27
MONROE	8
MONTGOMERY	16
MORGAN	6
PERRY	10
PICKENS	2
PIKE	11
RANDOLPH	5
RUSSELL	10
SHELBY	10
ST. CLAIR	27
SUMTER	5
TALLEDEGA	48
TALLAPOOSA	6
TUSCALOOSA	16
WALKER	49
WASHINGTON	4
WILCOX	10
WINSTON	13
DID NOT WORK	2
N/A	1

**INVESTIGATIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS
OF PROPERTY INVOLVED**

RESIDENTIAL:	
Dwellings, Occupied Vacant Under Construction, Duplexes, Etc.	354
Mobile Homes	207
Apartments	15
Hunting Clubs, Cabins, Camps, Etc.	10
Motels	1
Residential	6
DETENTIONAL:	
Jails, etc.	6
AUTOMOBILES, TRUCKS, VANS, RECREATION VEHICLES, ETC.:	
Automobiles, Trucks, Etc.	60
Farm Equipment, Heavy Machinery, Logging Equipment, etc.	5
Camper Trailer, Travel Trailer	5
EDUCATIONAL, BUSINESS, ASSEMBLIES, ETC.	
Businesses	59
Educational	17
Storage Sheds, Garages, etc.	23
Assemblies	6
Churches	6
Warehouse	3
OTHER:	
Bomb Threat	1
Explosives	2
Hay Barns	3

**INVESTIGATIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS
OF PROPERTY INVOLVED– Continued**

UNUSUAL, NOT OTHERWISE CLASSI- FIED, NOT REPORTED	
Miscellaneous	27
Did Not Work	3
Non-Fire	3
TOTAL	822

INVESTGATIONS REQUESTED BY

FIRE DEPARTMENT	307
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT	268
POLICE DEPARTMENT	93
INSURANCE CO/ADJUSTER	45
OWNER/FAMILY MEMBER/OCCUPANT/ VICTIM	46
STATE FIRE MARSHAL/OFFICE	39
VARIOUS OTHERS	21
UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED	3
TOTAL	822

CASUALTIES/FIRE FATALITIES

MISUSE OF SMOKING MATERIAL	12
UNDETERMINED	9
UNDETERMINED-NOT SUSPECIOUS	7
FIREPLACE	7
COMBUSTIBLES TOO CLOSE TO ELEC- TRIC HEATING EQUIPMENT	7
NATURAL GAS STOVE/OVEN LEFT UN- ATTENDED	6
WIRING-PERMANENT-INTERIOR	4
UNDETERMINED-SUSPECIOUS	3
UNKNOWN NOT REPORTED	2
ARSON	2
LIGHTNING	2
NATURAL GAS-FLOOR FURNACE	2
LP GAS SPACEHEATER-NONVENTED	2
ELECTRIC STOVE/OVEN LEFT UNAT- TENDED	2
MURDER BY FIRE	1
SUICIDE BY EXPLOSION	1
WIRING-PERMANENT-EXTERIOR	1
PIPING/TUBING-PERMANENT INTERIOR	1
NATURAL GAS SPACE HEATER- NONVENTED	1
WOOD HEATER	1
COMBUSTIBLES TOO CLOSE TO NATU- RAL GAS HEATING EQUIPMENT	1
COMBUSTIBLES TOO CLOSE TO ELEC- TRIC COOKING EQUIPMENT	1
COMBUSTIBLES TOO CLOSE TO KERO- SENE HEATING EQUIPMENT	1
AUTOMOBILE-COLLISSION	1
NOT OTHERWISE CLASSIFIED	1

FATALITIES BY COUNTY

AUTAUGA	-
BALDWIN	1
BARBOUR	2
BIBB	2
BLOUNT	1
BULLOCK	1
BUTLER	1
CALHOUN	5
CHAMBERS	1
CHEROKEE	-
CHILTON	-
CHOCTAW	-
CLARKE	1
CLAY	-
CLEBURNE	-
COFFEE	-
COLBERT	-
CONECUH	-
COOSA	-
COVINGTON	3
CRENSHAW	-
CULLMAN	-
DALE	1
DALLAS	4
DEKALB	-
ELMORE	3
EXCAMBIA	-
ETOWAH	-
FAYETTE	-
FRANKLIN	-
GENEVA	-
GREENE	1
HALE	-
HENRY	-

FATALITIES BY COUNTY– Continued

HOUSTON	-
JACKSON	1
JEFFERSON	15
LAMAR	-
LAUDERDALE	1
LAWRENCE	-
LEE	-
LIMESTONE	1
LOWNDES	-
MACON	-
MADISON	4
MARENGO	1
MARION	3
MARSHALL	2
MOBILE	-
MONROE	-
MONTGOMERY	-
MORGAN	1
PERRY	-
PICKENS	1
PIKE	-
RANDOLPH	1
RUSSELL	2
SHELBY	2
ST. CLAIR	-
SUMTER	-
TALLEDEGA	5
TALLAPOOSA	-
TUSCALOOSA	7
WALKER	1
WASHINGTON	3
WILCOX	-
WINSTON	-

FIRE FATALITIES

Alabama's Fire Death Record for the Past ten Years is as Follows:

1993-118	1998- 73
1994- 91	1999-118
1995-127	2000-102
1996- 75	2001- 76
1997-122	2002- 78

Deaths by Months for 2002 Were as Follows:

January	8
February	11
March	11
April	6
May	3
June	5
July	4
August	1
September	2
October	4
November	13
December	9
Unknown/Not Reported	1

FIRE FATALITIES– Continued

Deaths by Ages Were as Follows:

1-5	6
6-9	2
10-19	4
20-29	10
30-39	10
40-49	9
50-59	11
60-69	7
70-79	3
80-89	8
90-99	2
Unkown/Not Reported or Under Age of 1	6

Deaths by:

Race			Sex	
Black	36		Female	27
White	42		Male	51

SPRINKLER PERMITS

The State Fire Marshals Office issued one hundred nineteen (119) sprinkler contractor permits during the year of 2002. Monies collected for these permits were \$11,900.00.

BLASTER'S LICENSES

Ninety-one (91) blasting contractor licenses were issued during the year 2002. Monies collected were \$91,000.

Three hundred fifty-six (356) blaster's certifications were issued during the year 2002. Monies collected were \$17,800.

Total monies collected: \$108,800.

FIREWORKS

PERMITS ISSUED FOR 2002	1265
Manufacturer	2
Distributor	25
Wholesaler	20
Seasonal Retailer (before 7/10)	244
Seasonal Retailer(after 7/10)	166
Retail	562
Public Display	246
TOTAL NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS CONDUCTED IN 2002	963
MONIES COLLECTED:	
Manufacturer	\$2,000
Distributor	\$25,000
Wholesaler	\$7,000
Retailer	\$56,200
Seasonal Retailer (before 7/10)	\$24,400
Seasonal Retailer (after 7/10)	\$8,300
Public Display	\$6,150
TOTAL	\$129,050.00

INSPECTIONS

Inspections made during 2002 were requested by Department of Human Resources, Department of Health, Board of Corrections, etc.

CLASSIFICATION	INSPECTIONS	REINSPECTIONS
Storage	2	-
Educational	468	310
Residential	47	25
Businesses	24	2
Detentional	12	78
Assemblies	38	1
Health	-	1
Blasting Complaints	2	-
Unusual	2	1
TOTAL	595	418

INSPECTIONS BY COUNTY

AUTAUGA	2
BALDWIN	38
BARBOUR	8
BIBB	3
BLOUNT	4
BULLOCK	1
BUTLER	5
CALHOUN	26
CHAMBERS	10
CHEROKEE	4
CHILTON	12
CHOCTAW	8
CLARKE	9
CLAY	4
CLEBURNE	2
COFFEE	7
COLBERT	13
CONECUH	10
COOSA	3
COVINGTON	8
CRENSHAW	8
CULLMAN	6
DALE	8
DALLAS	9
DEKALB	6
ELMORE	16
EXCAMBIA	6
ETOWAH	2
FAYETTE	1
FRANKLIN	2
GENEVA	17
GREENE	3
HALE	7
HENRY	4

INSPECTIONS BY COUNTY– Continued

HOUSTON	5
JACKSON	15
JEFFERSON	19
LAMAR	2
LAUDERDALE	6
LAWRENCE	2
LEE	4
LIMESTONE	14
LOWNDES	9
MACON	1
MADISON	34
MARENGO	14
MARION	11
MARSHALL	15
MOBILE	21
MONROE	1
MONTGOMERY	4
MORGAN	6
PERRY	2
PICKENS	4
PIKE	3
RANDOLPH	8
RUSSELL	2
SHELBY	38
ST. CLAIR	9
SUMTER	8
TALLEDEGA	9
TALLAPOOSA	37
TUSCALOOSA	3
WALKER	5
WASHINGTON	2
WILCOX	8
WINSTON	2

REINSPECTIONS BY COUNTY

AUTAUGA	1
BALDWIN	27
BARBOUR	3
BIBB	3
BLOUNT	1
BULLOCK	3
BUTLER	5
CALHOUN	21
CHAMBERS	13
CHEROKEE	-
CHILTON	9
CHOCTAW	4
CLARKE	6
CLAY	3
CLEBURNE	6
COFFEE	5
COLBERT	2
CONECUH	4
COOSA	2
COVINGTON	2
CRENSHAW	7
CULLMAN	3
DALE	4
DALLAS	4
DEKALB	7
ELMORE	8
EXCAMBIA	7
ETOWAH	3
FAYETTE	3
FRANKLIN	2
GENEVA	3
GREENE	3
HALE	3
HENRY	1

REINSPECTIONS BY COUNTY– Continued

HOUSTON	4
JACKSON	14
JEFFERSON	44
LAMAR	1
LAUDERDALE	6
LAWRENCE	2
LEE	3
LIMESTONE	12
LOWNDES	3
MACON	3
MADISON	-
MARENGO	4
MARION	2
MARSHALL	8
MOBILE	30
MONROE	6
MONTGOMERY	1
MORGAN	4
PERRY	2
PICKENS	4
PIKE	3
RANDOLPH	5
RUSSELL	3
SHELBY	15
ST. CLAIR	10
SUMTER	3
TALLEDEGA	13
TALLAPOOSA	25
TUSCALOOSA	-
WALKER	3
WASHINGTON	2
WILCOX	3
WINSTON	2